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Security Council

Fifty-second Year

Provisional

3730th Meeting

Friday, 10 January 1997, 6.35 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Owada	(Japan)
Members:	Chile	Mr. Larraín
	China	Mr. Qin Huasun
	Costa Rica	Mr. Berrocal Soto
	Egypt	Mr. Elaraby
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Cabral
	Kenya	Mr. Mahugu
	Poland	Mr. Wlosowicz
	Portugal	Mr. Monteiro
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Park
	Russian Federation	Mr. Fedotov
	Sweden	Mr. Osvald
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Weston
	United States of America	Mr. Gnehm

Agenda

Central America: efforts towards peace

Report of the Secretary-General (S/1996/1045 and Add.1 and 2)

97-85011 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 6.35 p.m.

Expression of welcome to the new members of the Security Council and of thanks to the outgoing members of the Security Council

The President: As this is the first meeting of the Security Council to be held this year, I should like to welcome the new members of the Council: Costa Rica, Kenya, Portugal, Sweden and Japan. We all look forward with confidence to their participation in the work of the Council, which will be of invaluable assistance in the discharge of the Council's enormous responsibilities as it tackles so many challenges.

I should also like to express the Council's gratitude to the outgoing members for their important contributions to the Council's work. The representatives of Botswana, Germany, Honduras, Indonesia and Italy all, in an excellent manner, contributed their talents to the conduct of the business of the Council.

Expression of thanks to the retiring President

The President: I should also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to my predecessor, Ambassador Francesco Paolo Fulci, Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations, for the service he rendered as President of the Council for the month of December 1996. I am sure I speak for all the members of the Security Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Fulci for the great diplomatic skill with which he conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Central America: efforts towards peace

Report of the Secretary-General (S/1996/1045 and Add.1 and 2)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Argentina, Canada, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Venezuela, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Martini Herrera (Guatemala) took a seat at the Council table; Ms. Ramírez (Argentina), Mr. Fowler (Canada), Mr. Londoño-Paredes (Colombia), Mr. Tello (Mexico), Mr. Biegman (Netherlands), Mr. Aass (Norway), Mr. Laclaustra (Spain) and Mr. De Rojas (Venezuela), took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General on Central America: efforts towards peace, documents S/1996/1045 and Addenda 1 and 2.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/1997/18, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Venezuela.

Members of the Council have received photocopies of a letter dated 10 January 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Guatemala to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, transmitting the text of a letter of the same date from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guatemala addressed to the President of the Security Council, which will be issued as document S/1997/23.

The first speaker on my list is the representative of Guatemala, on whom I now call.

Mr. Martini Herrera (Guatemala) (*interpretation from Spanish*): With the signing of the final agreement last 29 December, Guatemala has successfully concluded a process of peace negotiations which merely requires verification by means of a peacekeeping force, as requested by the Secretary-General in his reports of 17 and 30 December 1996.

Over the past several years, the international community has followed with great interest and supported the Guatemalan process, and it has expressed its great appreciation at the signing of the peace agreement. Now it awaits eagerly the Council's decision to send a peacekeeping mission which will allow the Guatemalan people to consolidate the peace process and reunite the nation. It will also aid in the fulfilment of the agreements entered into as regards the ceasefire and the disarmament and demobilization of the combatants.

The process of peace negotiations in Guatemala was complex and difficult, requiring enormous internal and external efforts, and it will lead not only to reconciliation and the establishment of peaceful coexistence, but also to significant changes in the country. The United Nations has supported this process in a resolute and consistent fashion, and its involvement has been crucial and profound. The General Assembly has given firm support during the past few years which these negotiation have taken. It has authorized the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA). The Secretariat has had central responsibility in conducting intelligent and creative mediation. And Guatemala has also had the support of the Group of Friends of the Guatemalan Peace Process which has promoted this broad effort for the United Nations. To all of them, on behalf of the people and of the Government of Guatemala, we reiterate our appreciation and gratitude.

All of this valuable effort has a logical extension. After the conclusion of the negotiations and the signing of the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace, we come to the stage of application and implementation. Toward this end there is a need for international verification of the measures related to the agreement on the ceasefire through the authorization of a military component, which has been proposed by the Secretary-General upon the request of the parties, and on which the Security Council must take a decision.

We fully believe that the majority of Security Council members will agree to authorize this mission. And of course we know full well that all the members of the Council have a proper understanding of their responsibilities in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. The case that you have before you is clear. It consists simply in facilitating the verification of an agreement between the parties which have been in conflict. We therefore trust that the distinguished members of the Council will favourably resolve the request that has been put before them by the Secretary-General.

No one is unaware of the problem of a bilateral nature which has been raised by one of the permanent members of the Council in connection with this subject. In spite of how unusual this situation is, Guatemala has seen fit to conduct consultations with the delegation of that country on certain issues of a bilateral nature with the best of intentions and with the flexibility required to overcome the existing difficulty. In this connection I wish to emphasize my Government's willingness to contribute constructively to friendly relations among countries, and I would like to give assurances that it has never been our intention to interfere in the internal affairs of any other State. I also wish to reiterate that our international conduct is guided by respect for the principles contained in the United Nations Charter as regards refraining from taking actions that could affect the territorial integrity or political independence of other States.

Recognizing the gravity of the situation, in addition to the important bilateral consultations in which there have been constructive exchanges and substantial advances, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of my country has sent a letter to the President of the Council explaining the scope of these consultations. All of this represents palpable evidence of the goodwill of my Government and of its great desire to do its part to resolve this situation and to attain a favourable decision from the Council.

We believe that it must be borne in mind that the members of the Council, in fulfilment of their responsibilities in accordance with the Charter, must not allow bilateral issues unrelated to matters under their consideration to hinder their decisions. The fulfilment of the obligations of members of the Council requires prudence, equanimity and a sense of justice.

May I observe that abuse of the status of a permanent member through misuse of the veto is unacceptable. If this were to occur, the General Assembly would have to take note of it.

This matter is in the Council's hands. It means giving an opportunity to a country that has achieved peace following many sacrifices. The international community and all the Guatemalan people await your decision, which we hope will be favourable.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Colombia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make a statement.

Mr. Londoño-Paredes (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): May I first of all congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council at this important stage. We wish you every success. We know you, and we are certain that as you have always done, you will be guiding deliberations in this important organ of the United Nations in a brilliant and most constructive way.

It is very gratifying for my delegation to speak in the discussion of this item, at a historic moment in the process of seeking and consolidating peace in Guatemala. The signing of the peace accords on 29 December 1996 is of enormous significance for the peoples of Central America and for an entire hemisphere that has had to face the terrible reality of armed confrontation.

Colombia has always maintained close bonds of friendship and cooperation with the countries of Central America, several of which are neighbours and bordering States with which we share the Caribbean Sea. During the complex period of the Central American conflict, our country, together with Mexico, Panama and Venezuela, formed the Contadora Group, and were later joined in our efforts by four other brotherly countries of Latin America. Three years of great and constant efforts prevented the conflict from spreading and sowed the seeds for bringing peace to the region.

We also actively participated in the peace process in El Salvador and acted as promoters of the first dialogue between the Government of that country and the leaders of the Frente Farabundo Martí guerillas. In a small town in the north of El Salvador, somewhere between the jungle and the mountains, we were witnesses to that historic first step. Later we became members of the Secretary-General's Group of Friends of the Guatemala Peace Process. We are therefore proud to have contributed to the quest for peace and the consolidation of genuine democracy in that region, of which we feel we are a part.

With the signing of the Guatemala peace accords, not only is one of the most painful and long-standing confrontations on the continent being ended, but, with this closing of the chapter on the last of the Central American conflicts, it is clear that today, more than ever, violence is an outdated instrument of political struggle. Peace among the Guatemalan people is the result of an arduous process that was not free of vicissitudes, but which had the virtue of reflecting the feelings and determination of the people of Guatemala regarding peace as the only way to bring down the barriers that limit their economic and social development.

We believe that the negotiation process has been rigorous with regard to substantive issues and pragmatic with regard to operational aspects, and has the necessary legitimacy to contribute to the building of a new Guatemala. That is why we want to express our appreciation and praise to the Government of our sister Republic of Guatemala, and to the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) for their brave and sincere approach, as well as to the United Nations for the intelligent and tireless mediation work that it carried out.

Now is the time for a delicate and complex process of step-by-step demobilization of the guerilla forces and verification of the peace accords. We know that the entire international community, and, of course, members of the Security Council, will do all in their power to achieve the desired result, which will also be a great achievement for the United Nations, as it participates in one of the major endeavours that the world expects of it following the end of the cold war.

We are convinced that this process will help consolidate democracy and promote and strengthen relations between Guatemala and all the States Members of the United Nations.

The President: I thank the representative of Colombia for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Venezuela. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. De Rojas (Venezuela) (*interpretation from Spanish*): First, I should like to associate Venezuela with the congratulations extended to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of January. We wish you every success in the discharge of this very important responsibility.

Venezuela asked to address the Council on this occasion in order to express complete support for the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA),

as contained in document S/1996/1045 and addenda 1 and 2, as well as for the draft resolution before the Security Council, contained in document S/1997/18. Venezuela is a member of the Group of Friends of the Guatemala Peace Process, as well as a contributor to MINUGUA, and as such, as members are aware, is, together with the other members of the Group of Friends, a sponsor of the draft resolution.

We support the deployment of a small United Nations military component, attached to MINUGUA, as requested by the Secretary-General in his report. We are convinced that this is the best way of achieving a firm and lasting peace in accordance with the agreements signed in Guatemala City on 29 December 1996 by the representatives of the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG), in which both parties request the dispatch of a military mission by the United Nations in order to verify the implementation of the ceasefire agreements that were achieved during the process.

In this respect, Venezuela believes that it is the responsibility of the international community to give all the support that is necessary for the full implementation of the agreements, so that the Guatemalan people can begin to travel down the road to lasting peace and stable democracy, for the benefit of all the citizens of Guatemala and of our Latin American region. We also note the great importance of the letter from the Government of Guatemala, to which reference has been made here, and which is contained in document S/1997/23. For all of these reasons we hope that the draft resolution will be given the full support that it deserves from all the members of this Council.

In conclusion we would like, through you, Mr. President, to convey to the representatives of our sister Republic of Guatemala, our feelings of fraternal solidarity and steadfast support at this very important moment in its history. We assure them that we will continue to be with them at this time, and at all times in the future.

The President: I thank the representative of Venezuela for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of the Netherlands. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Biegman (Netherlands): Offering the customary congratulations on your presidency, Sir, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following associated countries have aligned themselves with this intervention: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

The Union warmly welcomed the signing in Guatemala City on 29 December of the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace.

That signing was a historic step in Guatemala's history, bringing an end to the longest-running conflict in the region, which had brought immense pain and suffering to the Guatemalan people. It is at the same time the culmination of the peace process in Central America.

The European Union has for a long time taken an active interest in the Central American peace process, in particular through the San José dialogue, and reiterates its readiness to support the Guatemalan people in implementing the peace agreements.

We wish to congratulate the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG). Their common determination and the persistent efforts of the United Nations, in particular of United Nations Moderator Jean Arnault, assisted by the Group of Friends, have laid the basis for the far-reaching agreements signed in Mexico, Oslo, Stockholm and Madrid that entered into force on the occasion of the signing ceremony in Guatemala City.

The implementation of the Agreement needs the full cooperation of the parties. We call upon them to fulfil in good faith the commitments they have entered into, bearing in mind that it is their primary responsibility to consolidate the peace and to prevent any resurgence of violence. The citizens of Guatemala deserve at last to live in peace.

Guatemala now faces the challenge of building a democratic society based on the rule of law, open to the equal participation of all Guatemalan citizens and with full respect for human rights.

The verification of the peace accords has been entrusted by both parties to the United Nations. The European Union therefore agrees with the report of the Secretary-General of 17 December 1996, which states that the verification will require the deployment of United Nations military observers and that, in accordance with the established practice of the United Nations, such deployment will require the authorization of the Security Council, which has consistently supported the peace

process in Central America since it first commended the efforts of the Contadora countries in resolution 530 (1983).

We therefore hope that the draft resolution before the Council today can be adopted by consensus, as a testimony of the continued determination of the whole international community to support the peace process in Guatemala.

We support the Secretary-General's recommendation for the attachment of a group of 155 military observers to the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA).

At the same time, we subscribe to the call contained in the draft resolution for both parties to honour their mutual commitments and to cooperate fully with the verification of the ceasefire agreement and all the resulting obligations.

The President: I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Norway, on whom I now call.

Mr. Aass (Norway): Allow me to associate Norway with the words of congratulation extended to you, Sir, upon your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January. We wish you every success in the execution of this important mission.

Since the late 1980s there has been a positive trend in Latin America towards democratization and peaceful resolution of conflicts. A milestone in this regard was the signing on 29 December last year of a final peace Agreement in Guatemala, which put an end to an internal armed conflict that had been ravaging the country for 36 years, causing the death of 150,000 people and displacing a million men, women and children.

The peace Agreement came as a result of arduous negotiations between the Guatemalan Government and the guerrilla movement, the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG). The negotiations which started with an accord in Oslo, in March 1990, establishing the format for formal talks. The perseverance and pragmatism shown by the negotiating parties bode well for the handling of the important challenges with respect to the social, economic and reconciliation issues which now confront the Guatemalans.

Guatemala is a poor country in a purely economic sense, but rich in history, traditions, culture and ethnic diversity. A majority of the population is of indigenous origin, and they have paid a heavy price in terms of social injustice and the sufferings of war. The Guatemalan people deserves a better tomorrow, and the peace agreement represents a historic opportunity in that respect.

The international community and the United Nations have played an essential role in the Guatemalan peace process. The patient and constructive mediation by the United Nations since 1994, coupled with the constructive engagement and encouragement of the Group of Friends, contributed in a significant way to the peaceful outcome of the conflict. Now the weapons have been silenced. However, peace is not merely the absence of war. There cannot be peace in Guatemala without development, education, tolerance and equal opportunities. Today the Guatemalans are eager to construct a better Guatemala. To assure a smooth transition to the new phase of reconstruction and reconciliation, Guatemala is, however, still in need of some help from its many friends. Some of this will be assistance provided by donor countries and international institutions. But to assist the Guatemalans in the process of beating swords into ploughshares, the Secretary-General has recommended the attachment to the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) of a group of 155 military observers and the requisite medical personnel.

Norway, as a member of the Group of Friends, has co-sponsored the draft resolution authorizing military observers in Guatemala. The reintegration of the URNG into civilian life is a crucial element of the peace process. Considering the heavy toll which has been exacted from its people throughout the armed conflict, it is our hope that no extraneous issue will be allowed to impede the endeavours to assure Guatemala a better future. In this respect, the members of the Security Council, and its permanent members in particular, bear a very special responsibility. My Government therefore urges the Security Council to adopt the present draft resolution.

If the international community is prepared to accompany Guatemala a bit further on the road to peace and normalization, the Guatemalan experience may become a model of constructive and effective international solidarity.

There is much at stake in the vote today. It is in the hands of the Security Council to give peace a chance in Guatemala.

The President: I thank the representative of Norway for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Mexico, on whom I now call.

Mr. Tello (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Mexico wishes to express its gratification and joy at the signing last 29 December of the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace by the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG). The signing of this Agreement is rightly a source of pride for the people of Guatemala. This is a time of joy and hope for millions of Guatemalans: Men and women of all social classes, ethnic groups and creeds whose shared objective is a harmonious and peaceful coexistence.

The people and the Government of Mexico cannot fail to express their greatest satisfaction at this historic moment for the Guatemalan people. Guatemala and Mexico are united by a past that gives them a shared frame of reference. We share history, geography, culture, traditions, languages and character. More than bordering countries, we are fraternal countries with converging hopes and aspirations, as we endeavour to be two modern and dynamic nations on the threshold of the twenty-first century.

The Government of Mexico wishes once again to pay tribute to the Government of Guatemala, led by President Alvaro Arzú, for its historic conviction that the only course for its people is that of harmony and peace. We also commend those who fought to build a society of freedom, justice and democracy. We sincerely congratulate the Government and the URNG for their dedication and their efforts to place above confrontation the objective of using dialogue and reason as the most valuable means to resolve disputes.

In the final analysis, this success belongs to Guatemalan society as a whole, which left behind doubts, fears and distrust and decided with courage and determination to set out on the road of solidarity and peace.

I also wish to pay tribute to Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who, with the vision of a statesman, tirelessly promoted the peace process in Guatemala. The Secretary-General showed a sensitivity characteristic only of the great internationalists. We also owe a debt of gratitude to those who have given to this process their dedication and personal conviction. I refer in particular to Mr. Jean Arnault, and also to the team of the Guatemala Unit, who at all times were able to imbue the peace process with confidence and optimism.

The draft resolution before the Security Council, contained in document S/1997/18, is not — I repeat, is not — the solution or the definitive element of peace in Guatemala. That was provided by a decision already taken by Guatemalan society. The draft resolution signifies only the recognition by the international community that the United Nations has a role to play in building an order — if not a new one, at least a different one — within the society of that country.

As is evident, the draft resolution is neither very ambitious nor very costly. It is a small expression of the solidarity the Guatemalan people needs in order to launch from a firm, secure and reliable base this new stage in its history as a free, independent and democratic nation.

Mexico appeals sincerely and deeply to all Security Council members to adopt this draft resolution. The Council would thus once again show its determination to discharge fully the primary responsibility that we have conferred upon it for the maintenance of international peace and security. Peace in Guatemala is not a regional issue. It is a matter that involves all Members of the United Nations.

It is in this spirit and this context that the Government of Mexico hopes that this draft resolution will be adopted unanimously in order to reflect the firm support of the international community for the efforts that ended the last conflict spilling blood on the American continent.

I cannot conclude without sincerely congratulating you, Sir, on the recent election of your country as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, as well as on your assumption of the presidency during the first month of your term. I also wish to express our appreciation to the Permanent Representative of Italy, who discharged the responsibilities of President with great skill in the month of December, at a particularly delicate time for our Organization.

The President: I thank the representative of Mexico for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Spain, on whom I now call.

Mr. Laclaustra (Spain)(*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of January. I also wish to associate my delegation fully with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union.

On 29 December 1996 the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) signed the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace, bringing an end to a brutal conflict and opening a new page in the history of Guatemala. On that date the full set of peace agreements entered into force, having been concluded following a negotiation process in which the parties, assisted by the valuable moderation of the United Nations and the support of the Group of Friends, demonstrated their firm commitment to peace.

The time has now come to implement the agreements reached and to apply the will of the parties and the wish of the entire people of Guatemala to lay the foundations for a firm and lasting peace, which must be ensured through the continued support of the international community, and of the United Nations in particular.

The agreement on the definitive ceasefire, signed in Oslo, is one of the pillars that will ensure the building of peace in Guatemala through the verification of the ceasefire, the separation of forces, disarmament and the demobilization of the URNG combatants. The mechanism for the verification of this agreement and for the other agreements signed between the parties has been entrusted to the United Nations.

In his report of 17 December 1996 and its addenda of 23 and 30 December, the Secretary-General underscores the need to deploy United Nations military personnel through the authorization of the Security Council of an additional military component of 155 personnel for a period of three months for the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA).

The draft resolution before the Security Council, sponsored by Spain together with the other members of the Group of Friends, will authorize that deployment and will make it possible for the achievements of the negotiating process between the parties to begin to have concrete results on the ground.

The Security Council, with the decision that it is preparing to adopt today, must once again exercise the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security conferred upon its members by the United Nations Charter. In this way, the presence of United Nations military observers in Guatemala will make it possible to verify the implementation of the agreement on the definitive ceasefire and for Central America to become a conflict-free region of true peace, freedom and democracy.

My delegation wishes to stress Spain's readiness to participate in the exercise of this collective responsibility by making an important contribution of its own troops to this military component of MINUGUA.

The firm commitment to the peace process that my country has shared with the other members of the Group of Friends remains fully intact in this new and hopeful stage of reconciliation, reconstruction and development that is beginning in a climate of peace, freedom and democracy for the people of Guatemala. The participation of the President of the Spanish Government, José María Aznar, in the signature ceremony of the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace, and the bilateral cooperation that my authorities have decided to increase considerably in pursuit of our assistance to Guatemala, are solid evidence of that commitment.

I wish to conclude by recalling that Madrid was host to the signing, on 12 December 1996, of one of the important agreements between the parties: that on the basis for the reintegration of URNG into the political life of the country. On that occasion, my country also sponsored a forum for reflection on reinsertion and demobilization in Guatemala, which made it possible to put forward ideas and proposals to ensure that the international community was in a position to meet the requirements of the parties and the immediate needs for the implementation of the peace accords in that crucial aspect.

The President: I thank the representative of Spain for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Argentina. I invite her to take a seat at the Council table and to make her statement.

Mrs. Ramirez (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election and to wish you, on behalf of my delegation, every success in your work, which we are convinced will be characterized by efficiency and transparency.

We also congratulate the Permanent Representative of Italy for his outstanding and well-appreciated work in December and for all the efforts made by his delegation.

I wish to refer to the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace that was signed at Guatemala City on 29 December 1996 between the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG), ending a conflict that for decades affected an important country of Central America. We have no doubt that the Agreement will make it possible to reverse the political, institutional, economic and social consequences of the conflict.

Furthermore, the implementation of the Guatemalan peace Agreement will make it possible to consolidate and stabilize democracy in the region, laying the foundations for a society in which peace, freedom, the rule of law, respect for human rights, justice and sustained economic development will prevail.

All of this joint effort of the Guatemalan people, the political leadership involved in the peace negotiations, the United Nations, the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General and the officials who have been in charge of this arduous task now makes it possible for the international community to express its gratification at the conclusion of this stage.

The process is not complete, however, since there is a need to follow up the agreements reached. In this framework, the follow-up action of the United Nations is significant. Thus, the task of monitoring the ceasefire, separating the forces and disarming and demobilizing the URNG combatants are the challenges that lie ahead.

In order to meet these challenges successfully, we fully support the Secretary-General's proposal, formulated in his report of 17 December, for the establishment of a military component of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala. We believe that the proposals and plans of the Secretary-General for this mission are wise and that they are appropriately reflected in the draft resolution before us. The adoption of the draft resolution would show that the understandable difficulties and concerns had been overcome.

Argentina is a sponsor of the draft resolution because we fully support the Guatemalan efforts to achieve peace. We are prepared to continue to support these efforts through practical action. The presence of civilian police, which my Government has been sending since 1995, is evidence of our commitment to this cause.

The President: I thank the representative of Argentina for her kind words addressed to me and my predecessor.

The next speaker is the representative of Canada. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Fowler (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): Less than two weeks ago, the Foreign Minister of Canada, in company with the former Secretary-General and many other supporters of peace in Guatemala, witnessed the signature ceremonies in Guatemala of the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace aimed at ending over 35 years of civil conflict in that country. We celebrate this achievement. We also recognize, as do the Guatemalan parties to the peace accords and the people of Guatemala, that there is much to be done — and to be done quickly — to effect a complete national reconciliation.

The fundamental issue today is how the international community can help the people of Guatemala inculcate a culture of peace in their society. After decades of conflict, mistrust and extreme insecurity, there is an urgent need to establish sustainable security in Guatemala, including human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, good governance, sustainable development and social equity. All of these are as important as the military aspects of the peace settlement.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada believes that we are now at the critical point where the peace-building measures envisaged in the Guatemala accords must be rapidly implemented if the momentum is not to be lost. We need to help put in place the conditions that will allow Guatemala to take charge of its own destiny and move forward with the important tasks of social, political and economic reconstruction it has set itself in the peace accords.

Among the immediate tasks to be taken up are the implementation of the ceasefire, the separation of forces and the disarmament and demobilization of combatants of the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG). The successful reintegration of the former combatants into civilian life is perhaps the first and most essential act of peace-building, because until this happens there can be no lasting peace and because these former rebels must secure a stake in building the new Guatemala.

In order to move forward with this work, we are pleased that the Security Council is considering a draft resolution which provides for a mandate for a military component to be added to the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA). Canada enthusiastically supports this initiative and stands ready to contribute military observers to this United Nations Mission.

Canada recognizes the historic achievement of the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) in the peace accords. This is the last stage in the Central American peace process, which Canada has supported in many direct and material ways. The parties and the people of Guatemala can remain assured that Canada will continue to support them actively as they move forward to implement the peace settlement.

I would also like to pay tribute at this time to the work both of United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) and of the United Nations Moderator of the Peace Talks, Jean Arnault, which has been so essential to the successful conclusion of the peace accords.

The President: It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I shall first call on those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Sir John Weston (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom warmly welcomes the signing of the final peace Agreement between the Guatemalan Government and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) in Guatemala City on 29 December 1996. The Agreement signals the end of 36 years of conflict and marks the culmination of a long and complex process of negotiation. We pay tribute to both parties, who have demonstrated that when the political will exists, even the most intractable conflicts can be resolved. We also commend the role of the United Nations mediation team, who have worked tirelessly in pursuit of this achievement.

The foundations for a lasting peace in Guatemala have been laid. A period of reconciliation and reconstruction is now necessary to insure a lasting peace for that country. Implementation of the Agreement will not be easy. It is essential that, at this crucial juncture, the international community and this Council, in particular, should demonstrate the commitment to support the process of reconciliation in Guatemala.

The United Kingdom, along with — as I understand it — all other members of the Council, agree with the Secretary-General that a rapid deployment of United Nations military observers is necessary in order to verify the ceasefire. The observer group has a clear mandate and exit strategy, as well as the consent of the parties. Authorization of such a deployment is clearly the responsibility of this Council. That is why, as a sponsor of the draft resolution before us, the United Kingdom will vote in favour of its adoption, and we strongly hope that it will in fact be adopted, on the objective grounds that the proposed deployment is necessary and desirable. We should all measure up to our Security Council responsibilities over this.

We look to both parties to the Agreement fully to implement their commitments, and to give the United Nations full cooperation in the verification of the ceasefire and demobilization of combatants.

The United Kingdom has long been a firm supporter of the peace process in Central America. We have participated actively in the San José dialogue between the European Union and Central American States. We will continue to work to ensure an effective European Union contribution to the consolidation of democracy in Guatemala. Together with other members of the Security Council, we pledge our full support to the long-suffering people of Guatemala. They have put their past behind them; let us do everything possible to ensure that they now enjoy a peaceful and prosperous future.

Mr. Monteiro (Portugal) (*interpretation from French*): Portugal has for centuries had very strong ties to Central America. It is therefore with particular satisfaction that my country welcomed the signing in Guatemala City on 29 December of the final peace Agreement between the representatives of the Government and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca. We believe that peace, national reconciliation and economic development are now within the grasp of the Guatemalan people.

This final Agreement, in conjunction with the agreements signed in Madrid, Mexico, Oslo and Stockholm, will lead to the end of the domestic conflict in Guatemala, which has been the longest in Central America.

The consequences of this Agreement are not limited to Guatemala. They have a particular meaning in the context of the overall process underway in Central America, and they can become an important contribution to the cause of peace, democracy, stability and economic development in the region.

In recent years, the United Nations has played a very important role in Guatemala. I would also like to pay tribute today to the patient and constructive efforts of the Secretary-General, the Group of Friends of the Guatemalan Peace Process, the United Nations system as a whole, and to all other international agencies which have supported and continue to support the peace process.

It is our hope that democracy and respect for human rights will continue to be consolidated in Guatemala. Portugal is gratified by these developments and also wishes to convey its special thanks to the men and women whom make up the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA). Since November 1994, when the Mission was established as part of the framework of the peace negotiations, they have verified the respect for the overall Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala which was signed by the parties, as well as some aspects of the agreement on the identity and rights of indigenous peoples, which is of fundamental importance.

The presence of MINUGUA was essential in putting in place a peace process whose purpose was to put an end to a conflict that had beset the people of Guatemala for the past 35 years. MINUGUA has played an indispensable and exemplary role in the restoration of law and order and respect for human rights in this country. We hope that henceforth all the national minorities will be able to participate fully in building a free and democratic society in Guatemala where social justice becomes a reality.

Portugal feels that the international community has the duty to respond positively to the requests of the two Guatemalan parties, by providing adequate means to verify the ceasefire, the separation of forces and the disarmament and demobilization of the forces of the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca. It is therefore a matter of helping and encouraging the parties to respect their commitments under the agreements they have signed.

The adoption of the draft resolution before us, which Portugal has co-sponsored, would be an essential contribution to peace and to national reconciliation and would be a follow-on to the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General.

One cannot overestimate the primary responsibility and the fundamental role which either the Government or the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca must continue to discharge in order to honour the mutual commitments they made to pursue the long-term consolidation of peace, democracy and stability in the country.

Portugal firmly believes that the peace process in Guatemala is an example to be followed by peoples and countries in similar situations throughout the world. We are certain that the two parties and the people of Guatemala will both be up to this challenge.

Mr. Dejammet (France) (*interpretation from French*): The signing of the peace Agreement in Guatemala on 29 December will go down in the history of Central America. The conflict in Guatemala, the oldest in the area, had been going on for more than 40 years. The settlement of the conflict is the culmination of a process that began in Esquipulas in 1987. That has made it possible to arrive at a settlement of the conflicts in the other countries of the region, particularly in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

The United Nations has played a central role in this process. The United Nations assumed this role successfully in Guatemala through the negotiation of various agreements which constituted the framework for peace.

Particularly sincere tribute is due to the efforts of the Secretary-General. I shall also mention, as was done

earlier by the Ambassador of Mexico, the special contribution by the United Nations Moderator of the Peace Talks, Mr. Jean Arnault.

It is natural that the Guatemalan parties turned to the United Nations to ask it to supervise the implementation of these agreements. Obviously, if we wish to express congratulations and good wishes, it is first and foremost to the people of Guatemala that we should address ourselves. The United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) has already been entrusted by the General Assembly with supervising those aspects of these agreements which relate to human rights. With regard to the military aspects, the Secretary-General has proposed to the Security Council the creation of an observer unit attached to MINUGUA with a mandate of three months.

No one can doubt — as has been pointed out and stressed — that this proposal is in keeping with the United Nations mission and with the competence of the Security Council and the responsibilities of its members. This is why France has given its support to this proposal. It will thus vote in favour of the draft resolution before the Council, which in principle enjoys the broadest support.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): My Government warmly welcomes the signing of the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace between the Guatemalan Government and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) in Guatemala City on 29 December 1996. We are pleased that the longest and most destructive armed conflict in Central America — along with the tremendous suffering it inflicted on the people of Guatemala — has finally come to a peaceful conclusion. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to the Government and people of Guatemala on this watershed event in their country's history.

We commend the parties concerned for their firm commitment to peace and the spirit of compromise, without which the successful conclusion of the negotiations could not have been achieved. We also wish to recognize the Secretary-General, the Group of Friends of the Guatemalan Peace Process and the United Nations system as a whole for the invaluable assistance they rendered to the parties concerned in their search for firm and lasting peace.

The entire Central American region can take pride in this remarkable achievement. With the end of conflict in Guatemala, the region is peaceful for the first time in nearly three decades and is free to continue peaceful progress towards democracy and development.

We believe the peace process in Guatemala has demonstrated that, even in the wake of severe civil conflict, peace and democracy are not unattainable goals so long as the parties concerned exhibit the necessary political will to make peace, and are supported in their efforts by their regional neighbours, the United Nations and the international community as a whole. The role of the United Nations in the peace process has been particularly noteworthy. As elsewhere in Central America, throughout the conflict in Guatemala the United Nations has played an indispensable role in promoting peace by making available its good offices and by establishing in 1994 the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA). Recently, in anticipation of the historic conclusion of the final peace agreement, the General Assembly renewed the mandate of MINUGUA until 31 March 1997 as a clear expression of the international community's continued political support for the peace process in Guatemala.

Notwithstanding the ground-breaking achievements made thus far, Guatemala's journey to lasting and long-term peace and stability is not yet over and is unlikely to become any less arduous. The most important task in the coming days must be to ensure the implementation of all the agreements which the parties have freely entered into. Needless to say, peace and reconciliation agreed to on paper can only be translated into reality if both parties comply fully with their obligations under the peace agreements.

With the signing of the final peace agreement last December, the overall package of peace accords is now in full force. In light of the peace package's comprehensive nature, its implementation will present a major challenge, not only to the parties themselves but also to the United Nations and the international community as a whole. While we encourage both the Government of Guatemala and the URNG to use the momentum now created to undertake all necessary measures to fully implement the peace package, we believe that the United Nations should also help consolidate the historic progress made towards a lasting peace in Guatemala.

It has long been anticipated that verification of the military aspects of the peace agreement will require the

deployment of military observers. Given that the overall package of peace accords has entered into force and the request has been made by the parties for the deployment of the United Nations verification mission, we support the recommendation of the Secretary-General to attach a group of military observers to the existing MINUGUA operation. We believe that the recommended dimensions of deployment would enable the effective fulfilment of the entrusted tasks, namely, ceasefire verification, separation of forces, and the disarmament and demobilization of URNG combatants.

My delegation will therefore vote in favour of the draft resolution on authorizing the attachment to MINUGUA of a group of 155 military observers and requisite medical personnel for a period of three months.

Mr. Wlosowicz (Poland): My delegation wholeheartedly welcomes the final agreement signed on 29 December 1996 between the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) and the fact that the two parties are united at long last in their willingness to secure peaceful and stable life for their country.

We congratulate yesterday's adversaries on their courage and farsightedness, but it is the people of Guatemala who should be congratulated in the first place. The end of the war and the commitment of the parties to implement their agreements will undoubtedly create an environment favourable to further democratization, economic recovery and the promotion of the rule of law.

I believe it would not be unfair to say that the international community in general and the United Nations in particular deserve to be commended for assisting the parties in their attempts to peacefully resolve the conflict and in setting up the framework within which the parties have agreed to cooperate. In this context my delegation highly appreciates the contribution made by the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA).

In the opinion of the Polish delegation, continued United Nations assistance is indispensable for the successful implementation of the peace agreements in Guatemala. It also, and perhaps above all, applies to the agreement on the definitive ceasefire signed at Oslo on 4 December 1996 and to the related verification measures. We believe that in light of previous international investments in the peace process in Guatemala, we cannot afford to fail to respond positively to the parties' request to entrust the United Nations team of military observers with the task of verification of the above-mentioned agreement.

Consequently, my delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution authorizing the attachment of the group of observers to MINUGUA, as recommended by the Secretary-General.

Finally, let me pay tribute to the members of the Group of Friends of the Guatemalan Peace Process for the role they have played in preparing the draft resolution before us.

Mr. Osvald (Sweden): The signing of the peace Agreement in Guatemala on 29 December 1996 put an end to 36 years of bitter conflict. Guatemala will now finally have the opportunity to devote its energies to peaceful, long-term development, together with the rest of the Central American region. Since the 1970s, Sweden has worked in support of democracy and peace in Central America and has played an active part in developments leading to the historic peace Agreement in Guatemala. The Swedish Government was honoured to host the signing of the agreement on constitutional reforms and the electoral regime in Stockholm last December. Sweden has pledged substantial contributions in support of the important tasks of demobilization and the reintegration into society of former combatants. Sweden participates in the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA). Sweden is also a substantial contributor to MINUGUA's fund for institution-building.

The United Nations has played a crucial role in laying a foundation for peace in Guatemala through the efforts of MINUGUA, the Guatemala Unit of the Secretariat and, of course, the United Nations Moderator, Mr. Jean Arnault. The Group of Friends of Guatemala has also made important contributions in support of the peace process. The agreement on the definitive ceasefire expressly assigns the role of verifying the military aspects of the peace settlement to the United Nations. As proposed by the Secretary-General, this task should be carried out by the attachment to MINUGUA of a group of military observers and some medical personnel. It is in keeping with United Nations practice that this military component should be authorized under a Security Council mandate. This is a case in which the Security Council is called upon to exercise its primary responsibility for the

maintenance of international peace and security. It is important that the draft resolution be adopted by the Council. It enjoys Sweden's full support.

The Guatemalan peace Agreement is multidimensional in character. It is a good example of how the practical application of a broader concept of security can create a basis for peaceful development. In addition to ceasefire and military provisions, the package of peace accords includes agreements on constitutional, social and economic issues, human rights and the identity and rights of indigenous peoples. It is appropriate that verification is entrusted to a multidimensional United Nations operation. The contributions of various parts of the United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), will be of major importance in supporting implementation of the peace agreements. Coordination between all international organizations and agencies supporting the peace process is important.

Tribute should in particular be paid today to the Guatemalan parties themselves; they have carried the peace process forward and will carry responsibility for its success. The final success of the Guatemalan peace process will, of course, be measured through the implementation of the peace agreements in all their aspects — military and civilian. The decision before us today would enhance the contribution of the United Nations to assisting the parties in this endeavour.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The signing of the overall package of peace accords on Guatemala, the last of which was the final peace Agreement signed on 29 December 1996, represents an important milestone achieved by the United Nations in support of peace and stability in a country long torn by disputes and hostilities. Egypt again welcomes the signing of these agreements and congratulates the people of Guatemala on that achievement. The General Assembly has, so far, taken the major role in the process of bringing about peace in Guatemala by adopting many resolutions and decisions, the most important of which was General Assembly resolution 48/267, which called for the establishment of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA). That Mission successfully and ably supervised all the efforts leading to the completion of the agreements, which have been crowned with the final peace accord.

We must also thank the Secretary-General and his assistants for their efforts, which increased the chances of achieving agreement. Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) have now requested the United Nations to verify the implementation of all the agreements that, assisted by the United Nations, they negotiated together. The Security Council must make its contribution to increasing the chances of the implementation of these accords by adopting the draft resolution before the Council today.

The delegation of Egypt supports all the provisions of this draft resolution, and we will vote in favour of it. Egypt believes that any request by a State to the Security Council to supervise the implementation of a peace agreement negotiated with the assistance of the Organization deserves a positive response, particularly when such a response is consonant with the responsibility of the Security Council for maintaining international peace and security. While we appreciate the circumstances surrounding negotiations on the draft resolution, we hope that they will not prevent the Council from adopting the draft resolution and thereby shouldering its full responsibilities for assisting Guatemala to establish peace and stability in accordance with the peace agreement.

Mr. Mahugu (Kenya): We are encouraged by the fact that one of the longest wars fought in this region is finally coming to an end, and in this regard we welcome the signing of the December accord. We are particularly aware of the United Nations involvement in the peace process in Guatemala and of how useful and successful that involvement has been to date. The report of the Secretary-General on the current status of the peace process clearly sees a role for the United Nations in the verification of the peace accords negotiated with its assistance. Consequently, having considered the Secretary-General's recommendations, my delegation is of the view that increasing the strength of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) so as to fulfil the additional verification functions entrusted to it by the ceasefire agreement is crucial for its final implementation.

In this regard, my delegation has noted the Secretary-General's confirmation that the mechanism to oversee the preparation of assembly points to receive the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) combatants have been put in place. We have also

observed that paragraph 16 of the report reaffirms the desire of both parties to see the military aspects of the peace settlement urgently implemented. Accordingly, we strongly believe that the support of the international community for the efforts of Guatemalans in their quest for peace should be forthcoming and unequivocal and should not be seen to waver at this critical stage. Kenya will therefore vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Mr. Cabral (Guinea-Bissau) (*interpretation from French*): The agreement on the definitive ceasefire between the Guatemalan Government and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG), signed in Oslo on 4 December 1996, is the felicitous outcome of a long process marked by a series of peace agreements signed in Madrid, Mexico, Oslo Stockholm and, finally, in Guatemala City on 29 December 1996. This is certainly the beginning of a new era and the culmination of the joint efforts of the parties themselves, the countries of the region and the entire international community.

The United Nations has always followed the situation in Guatemala with special attention and sustained interest because it constituted, in everyone's view, a serious threat to international peace and security and, consequently, to the members of the international community as a whole.

It is important to recall that the General Assembly, in keeping with its obligations under the Charter, has always played a central role in promoting peace in Guatemala, and to this end it created the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA).

The Security Council, aware of the importance of peace in Central America for the rest of the world, paid tribute through its resolution 530 (1983) to the Contadora countries for their tireless efforts to facilitate the definitive return of peace and stability to the region. It is therefore quite appropriate, wise and also in keeping with its mandate that the Security Council, 14 years after the adoption of that resolution, decided to devote a debate to the new situation in Guatemala.

We are grateful for the various clear reports of the Secretary-General on this important issue, which have given us all the elements we need for a detailed understanding of the events and every reason to rejoice at the advent of the long-awaited peace in Guatemala. My delegation therefore welcomes with great satisfaction the Agreement the parties to the conflict have reached, which, by providing for a definitive ceasefire, opens up new prospects for peace, stability and development in a country whose population has suffered for too long the torments of a war that lasted for decades, 35 years to be more precise.

In the view of my delegation, it is only natural that the international community as a whole and the Security Council in particular should support unreservedly the peace process in Guatemala and should take all necessary measures to consolidate this process and promote the strict implementation of the ceasefire Agreement. This Agreement is an important stage in the building of a democratic society based on recognition of and respect for its pluralistic make-up and the rights of each citizen.

In recalling that the negotiations in Guatemala were both long and difficult, my delegation wishes to further highlight the responsibility that the Security Council has to respond favourably to the request made by the Secretary-General in his report with respect to strengthening in the short term the United Nations Mission in Guatemala. The addition to MINUGUA of a group of military observers and requisite medical personnel would seem to us indispensable in order to ensure that peace in Guatemala become a reality. Indeed, there are prior conditions to be met and steps which the two parties must take decisively and without delay in order to make possible the overall implementation of the provisions provided for in the peace Agreement.

Therefore, now more than ever the actors in the political life of Guatemala, and more especially the people of Guatemala, need to feel the presence and also enjoy the concrete support of the United Nations so as to avert the vicissitudes that are involved in any settlement of any conflict of this type. In this way, they will be in a better position to respond to the need to work to overcome the numerous difficulties still remaining and any possible pitfalls. The people of Guatemala, who have never doubted the United Nations, deserve our unflagging support and our total solidarity.

My delegation hopes that all the conditions will be met so that the peace in Guatemala is a final and genuine peace, with a return to a normal and decent life for the entire population of this country. Yes, we hope that the ceasefire, once it enters into force, will be respected scrupulously by all the parties and that the separation of the forces will take place in a spirit of cooperation and mutual understanding. The disarming of the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) under the conditions provided for in the Agreement is necessary

because it is the keystone for establishing and strengthening trust between the parties.

With regard to the demobilization of the combatants, it seems essential to us to start thinking now — bearing in mind similar situations — about the conditions needed in order to help them to return to civilian life. This will only be possible with the effective aid of the international community.

While welcoming the important advance that brothers who were once enemies have made in Guatemala, my delegation recognizes and deeply appreciates the contribution of the countries of the region, which have expended much energy and demonstrated great savoir faire in finding, inspired by the cultural values and political concepts of their own countries, the ways and means of bringing about a definitive peace in Guatemala.

We, in this respect, wish to extend, here and now, this well-deserved tribute to the Governments of Norway, Spain and Sweden, the United Nations personnel and all those who, by their keen interest in the fate of the Guatemalan people, have made it possible to bring about the return of civil peace and to foster national reconciliation in the country.

Guinea-Bissau will support all efforts to preserve this peace so well deserved by the people of Guatemala.

Therefore, my delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution, the merit of which has been disputed by no one here and which should be adopted without opposition.

Mr. Larraín (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): We are at a crucial moment in the struggle for peace in Guatemala. Even at the risk of being repetitive, we cannot fail to say that we are witnessing the end of a civil war that has gone on for more than 35 years and has taken a toll of more than 100,000 victims.

The United Nations has played an important role in restoring normality for the citizens of that beloved brotherly country, and that should be a source of legitimate pride for this Organization.

The two parties to the Guatemalan conflict have requested one final step by the United Nations to consolidate this long and successful effort for peace, and we are confident that the Security Council will once again be responsive to this appeal and will authorize the sending of observers to verify the disarmament process and the demobilization of the forces in conflict.

This is one final effort by this Organization, and we are all aware that within the scope of peacekeeping operations that have been authorized by the Council, the operation now being requested is truly one of minimal dimensions. What has been requested is a group of 155 observers at an unusually low cost for this type of operation. Not only is the operation necessary, but this would also be a demonstration of political will by the Council and an expression of its interest in the Central American peace process.

We believe that the Security Council and all its members are aware of their responsibilities for preserving international peace and security and the importance of successfully completing the United Nations actions to bring peace to Guatemala and to the Central American isthmus as a whole. This has been and continues to be a matter of high priority for the entire hemisphere. Once peace is consolidated in this region, a region that once was a focus of concerns in this Council and is today becoming an area of great hope, there will remain a long difficult road to restore democratic coexistence and economic well-being. Our country, so far as its means permit, has been promoting programmes of cooperation in the Central American region and is prepared to continue doing so.

Millions of fellow human beings with a long history of suffering and deprivation are looking to this Council for support in their struggle for peace. We therefore make another sincere appeal to the members of the Council to assume their responsibilities towards these suffering people and support a draft resolution which constitutes the final stepping stone in the long process to consolidate in Central America an area of peace, freedom, democracy and development.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Japan.

Speaking in my national capacity, I wish to state that Japan has on numerous occasions expressed its hope for the early conclusion of an agreement to bring an end to the decades-long conflict in Guatemala. Japan, thus, heartily welcomes the signing by the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) on 29 December last year of the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace. Both parties are to be commended for their courageous and determined

efforts in achieving this important and decisive first step towards peace and national reconciliation. I should like to add that this peace Agreement is truly of historic significance in that it puts an end to the last internal conflict in the region. Peoples throughout Central America can now look forward to building a peaceful and prosperous future.

The involvement of the United Nations played an important, indeed, I would say crucial role in bringing the two sides to the negotiating table and in achieving a successful outcome, reminding us once again of the valuable contribution this Organization continues to make to the maintenance of international peace and security. I should also like to express my admiration for the contributions made by the Group of Friends of the Guatemala Peace Process in promoting the negotiations.

Japan strongly hopes that genuine and enduring peace will take firm hold in Guatemala, and would urge the Government of Guatemala and its people to join together in the effort to achieve national reconciliation and economic and social development. We believe that the deployment of a group of 155 military observers and medical personnel will be useful in solidifying the peace, and thus we strongly support the draft resolution authorizing that effort. My delegation expresses its sincere appreciation to the countries that participated in drafting such a concise and effective draft resolution. We hope that it will be adopted unanimously, thus demonstrating to the broader international community that the Security Council is indeed united in supporting the consolidation of peace in Guatemala and, in particular, the role that the United Nations has to play in that process.

In closing, let me take this opportunity to state that the Government of Japan has followed with great interest and concern the peace and democratization process in Guatemala. At the time of the presidential election in November 1995, for example, Japan sent an electoral observer and made a contribution of $100,000 to the Organization of American States for its election monitoring activities. It also sent two electoral observers for the presidential election held in January 1996. Japan intends to make further contributions, both political and financial, to the peace process in Guatemala, taking into account the specific needs of that country.

I now resume my functions as the President of the Security Council.

I now put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/1997/18.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Chile, Costa Rica, Egypt, France, Guinea Bissau, Japan, Kenya, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Against:

China

The President: The result of the voting is as follows: 14 in favour, one against and no abstentions. The draft resolution has not been adopted, owing to the negative vote of a permanent member of the Security Council.

I shall now call on those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting on the draft resolution.

Mr. Gnehm (United States of America): It is most unfortunate that the Security Council could not reach agreement on authorizing a military observer component to the United Nations Human Rights Verification Mission in Guatemala, the Mission that we call MINUGUA. After 36 years of war, the Guatemalan people have the chance to fulfil their rich potential. The Guatemalan Government, the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG), the United Nations, the Friends of Guatemala and others have invested significant diplomatic and financial resources in bringing peace to Guatemala. We regret that one member of the Council was not able to give the larger interest of regional peace and security the priority it deserves.

Since democratic government was restored in Guatemala in 1985, the United States has supported a negotiated settlement of the conflict. We are proud to have served as a member of the Group of Friends since 1994, when the United Nations took over moderation of the negotiations. The international community has made peace in Guatemala a priority. The tireless efforts of the Government of Guatemala and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity, together with the international community, have now come to fruition. On 29 December in Guatemala City, the Government of Guatemala and URNG ended their nation's long, bloody civil war, which

has cost more than 100,000 lives. The realization of a comprehensive peace in Guatemala is a tremendous achievement. It ends the last conflict in Central America and the longest-running armed conflict in the hemisphere.

The most immediate need in Guatemala is to demobilize 3,000 URNG guerrillas and help them return to civilian life. Unfortunately, this body failed to agree upon the Secretary-General's recommendation for the establishment of a military observer group to monitor that demobilization.

URNG and the Guatemalan Government agree on the need for a short demobilization period that will quickly get URNG fighters back into productive civilian life. The United States and the other Friends of Guatemala will continue to seek a means to that end.

The reconstruction of Guatemala's infrastructure and reconciliation in Guatemalan society will take time and substantial international support: financial and moral. Donors will meet in Brussels later this month to coordinate international assistance to Guatemala. The United States has already begun an ambitious post-war assistance programme that will provide millions of dollars in additional aid as part of a process to create a new, peaceful and prosperous Guatemala.

Despite this setback today, we remain determined that those who support peace in Guatemala will find a way to support the noble ends of the Guatemalan peace process.

Mr. Berrocal Soto (Costa Rica) (*interpretation from Spanish*): As this is the first time that my country is speaking as a member of the Security Council, I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir. Under your able leadership and guidance, we are in the best possible hands. That is my conclusion after having worked with you since 1 January. My delegation also takes this opportunity to express its appreciation to you for your enormous diligence, which has made it possible for our informal consultations of recent days to conclude today and for the Security Council to pronounce itself — however regrettably — on the dispatch to Guatemala of a mission of military observers.

Our gratitude also goes to the Group of Friends of Guatemala and the Secretariat.

As a Central American country and brother of Guatemala, Costa Rica has embraced the enormous task undertaken by the Guatemalan people to achieve a firm and lasting peace. Ten years ago in Guatemala, we Central Americans took a firm decision to assume direction of a negotiating process that we ourselves had designed and agreed upon, which led to the end of fighting in our region, the achievement of peace, the consolidation of democracy, respect for human rights and the reconciliation of our peoples.

In Guatemala in 1987, the Presidents of Central America effectively endorsed a procedure for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace in Central America, known as the Esquipulas II Agreement, which consolidated the fruits of the useful negotiations undertaken over three years through the mediation of the Contadora Group.

Based on Esquipulas II, Central America, with the active support and solidarity of the international community, carried through a broad political negotiation and dialogue, the achievements of which are now before us: War has ended in Nicaragua, El Salvador and, now, in Guatemala. In the five Central American countries, there are democratic Governments established through free and pluralistic electoral processes. Throughout the countries of the area, there is a broad pattern of respect for individual freedoms and the rule of law is the basis of political organization.

In this scenario developed by Central America, our Guatemalan brothers have carried out an important exercise of negotiation and national reconciliation that has brought peace, an end to a long-standing conflict of over 35 years and the establishment of a series of political, economic and social agreements aimed at transforming and modernizing Guatemala.

Guatemala has not only put an end to war; it has made significant strides towards establishing a broad-based, pluralistic, multiethnic society that respects human rights and whose fundamental aim, based on national reconciliation, is the achievement of progress, development, justice and equity for all its inhabitants, without exception.

It is a source of special satisfaction to my country that this noteworthy effort of the people of Guatemala has always enjoyed the valuable support of the international community, expressed, on the one hand, by the teamwork of the Group of Friends — made up of Colombia, France, Mexico, Norway, Spain, the United States of America and Venezuela — in the context of the negotiating process; and, on the other, by the United Nations, whose active

presence was essential in promoting a resolution of the conflict and fostering the conditions necessary to the return of refugees and displaced persons, the observance of human rights and development assistance, and as an expression of the political support necessary for the pursuance of peace negotiations through the active and successful mediation of the Secretariat.

For over 10 years, the United Nations has clearly and unyieldingly supported the peace efforts of Central America. Repeated resolutions of the General Assembly have established the necessary political backing and support for the tasks of development. Moreover, this Council, through its own competence established under the Charter, has given constant attention to the situation in Central America and responded promptly to the peacekeeping needs of the region, as evidenced by the operations of the United Nations Observer Group in Central America, the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador and the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala.

For all these reasons, my delegation deeply regrets that on this, Costa Rica's first opportunity to participate in the formal voting of the Security Council, and with regard to a situation that has nothing whatsoever to do with the peace process in Guatemala, one delegation has exercised its right of veto. We have thus lost an excellent opportunity for the United Nations to assume a leading and active role in that brotherly Central American country.

The exercise of this veto is doubly regrettable, given the clear and firm assertions of that delegation that it agrees with the objectives and has no objection whatever to the text of the draft resolution submitted to the Security Council by the Group of Friends, which enjoys the sponsorship of my country and several other member States.

The situation in which we find ourselves following the exercise of that veto is extremely damaging not to Guatemala or to Central America, but to the United Nations. The Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca have faithfully carried out all that was agreed in and established by the peace accords. We are sure that, in the worst-case scenario, there will be friendly democratic countries ready to carry out the important functions that would have been entrusted to that mission of military observers, if the Government of Guatemala requests it of them. For the United Nations, however, this is the loss of an extraordinary opportunity to uphold the objectives of the Charter and to maintain its presence and influence on a peace process that, fortunately, is drawing to a close and with which not only Guatemala, but the entire Central American region, is closing the door on many years of war, death and destruction.

It is particularly painful for the delegation of Costa Rica to have to make this statement. My country has played an active and leading role in the Central American peace process. Without being involved in the armed conflicts that have torn our region over the past two decades, Costa Rica was actively committed to the negotiations that ultimately achieved peace and reconciliation in Nicaragua and El Salvador. We would have been happy today if, with our vote, the Security Council had unanimously approved the dispatch of that mission of military observers to Guatemala. We deeply regret that this has not been possible. The damage is to the United Nations.

The President: I thank the representative of Costa Rica for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Fedotov (Russian Federation) *(interpretation from Russian):* The Russian Federation notes with great satisfaction that, after long years of armed conflict and instability, Central America has now embarked on a stage of consolidating peace processes and strengthening democratic institutions and economic recovery. It is one of the few regions of the world in recent times to achieve genuine and tangible progress in the settlement of internal conflicts. This has been possible largely because of the efforts of the international community, and above all of the United Nations.

The signing between the Government of Guatemala and the insurgent movement Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca on 29 December 1996 of the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace was an important event, marking the culmination of a long-standing internal conflict in that country and the last hotbed of armed resistance in the Central American region. We are sure that the achievement of peace in Guatemala, after 36 years of civil war, will promote the strengthening of stability and security not only there, but throughout all Central America.

Russia, which has consistently advocated a firm political settlement in Guatemala, feels that the efforts of the international community should now be directed towards strengthening the peace process in that country.

For our part, we are prepared to help further in the interests of favourable external conditions for a successful completion of that process.

Highest commendations deservedly go to the activities of the United Nations mediation group in the negotiations between the Guatemalan parties. We would like to express to the members of that group our gratitude for their contribution to achieving peace in Guatemala.

Bearing in mind the requests addressed by the Guatemalan parties to the United Nations, the recommendations of the Secretary-General and the views of the Group of Friends of the Guatemalan Peace Process, Russia supports the proposal to give to the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA), on a temporary basis, a group of 155 military observers for a three-month period, with a clearly defined one-time mandate.

In light of what I have said, the Russian delegation voted for that draft resolution. We regret that it was put to a vote with such haste, at a time when consultations on the issue could have been continued.

Mr. Qin Huasun (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Chinese delegation has just voted against the draft resolution before us. This is not a situation we would have liked to see. It was caused entirely by the erroneous acts of the Government of Guatemala.

China has all along supported the peace process in Guatemala and the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. We welcome and are gratified by the peace Agreement reached by the two parties in Guatemala, and sincerely hope that peace and stability will prevail in the country.

Regrettably, however, the Government of Guatemala has, for four consecutive years, unscrupulously supported activities aimed at splitting China at the United Nations, in flagrant violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and in disregard of repeated démarches of the Chinese Government. It was furthermore bent on inviting, in disregard of the solemn warnings of the Chinese Government, the authorities of Taiwan to the signing ceremony of the peace Agreement in Guatemala, thereby providing them with a venue for secessionist activities against China.

It is the unshirkable responsibility of all Member States to safeguard the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The Government of Guatemala, by its own doing, has trampled upon the purposes and principles of the Charter of the Charter of the United Nations, contravened General Assembly resolution 2758 (XXVI), infringed upon China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, interfered in its internal affairs and hurt the feelings of the Chinese people.

The Guatemalan authorities cannot expect to have the cooperation of China in the Security Council while taking actions to infringe upon China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. No country's peace process should be at the expense of another country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Despite the actions taken by the Government of Guatemala that harmed China's interests, we still made reasonable suggestions in a constructive and forward-looking approach in order to find a proper solution to the issue at hand. We hoped that the Government of Guatemala could take concrete actions to correct its mistakes. This fully shows China's sincerity. However, the Government of Guatemala turned a deaf ear to all this and clung to its erroneous position, thereby setting serious obstacles in the way of our support for the draft resolution. Undoubtedly, the Government of Guatemala should be held responsible for all the consequences arising therefrom.

I wish to reaffirm the principled position of China on the question of Taiwan. There is but one China in the world and the Government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal Government representing the entire Chinese people. The question of Taiwan is a major question of principle that bears upon China's sovereignty, territorial integrity and the cause of national reunification. It falls entirely within China's internal affairs and brooks no outside interference whatsoever. The Chinese Government has no room for compromise on this question. It is the unswerving determination of the Chinese Government to safeguard its State sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Finally, I wish to point out that if the Government of Guatemala is indeed sincere, values its peace process and moves to remove the obstacles, the Chinese delegation may reconsider the authorization of the deployment of military observers in Guatemala by the Security Council.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 8.35 p.m.